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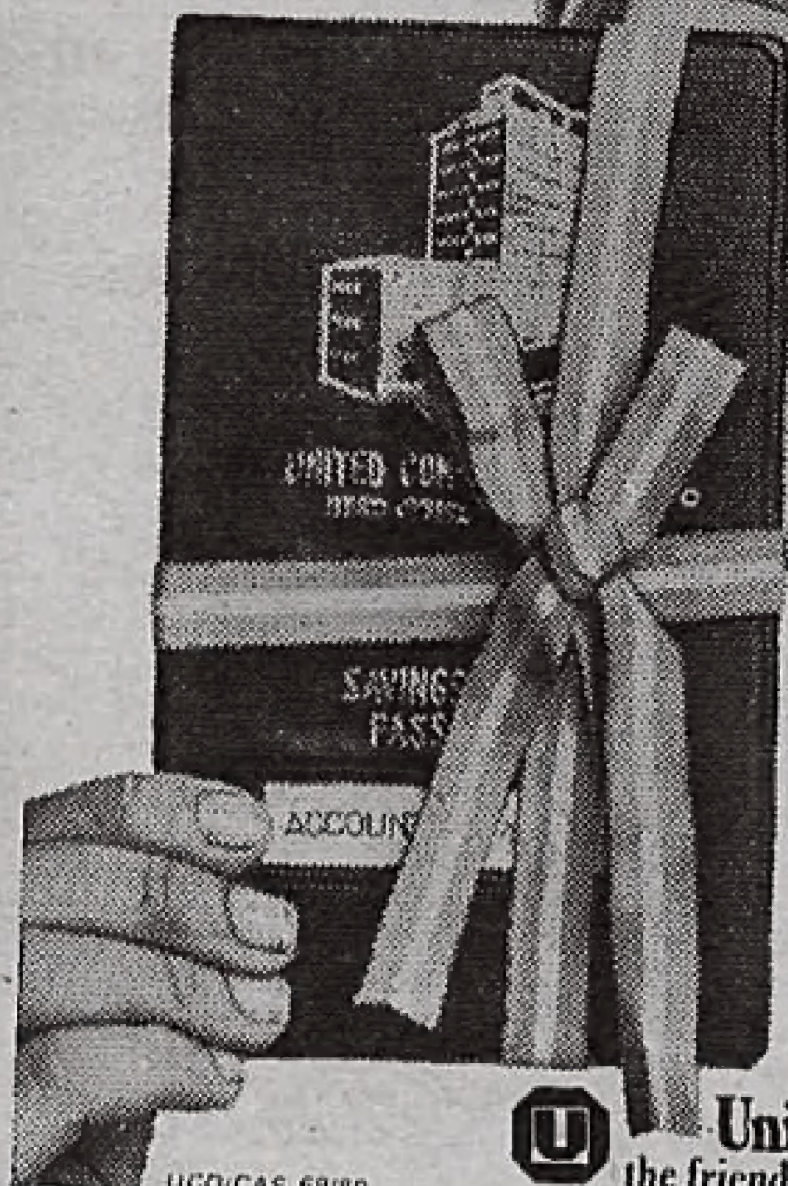
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AND TWELVE OTHER FEATURES

GOLDEN WORDS OF YORE

आरम्भगुरुर्व क्षयिणी क्रमेण लघ्वी पुरा वृद्धिमती च पश्चात् ।
दिनस्य पूर्वार्धपरार्धभिन्ना छायेव मैत्री खलसज्जनानाम् ।

*Arambhaguror̥ kṣayinī krameṇa laghvī purā vṛddhimatī ca paścāt
Dinasya pūrvārdhaparārdhabhinnā chāyeva maitrī khalasaj-
janānām*

Friendship among the bad and the good are like the shadows during the first half and the second half of the day respectively. The former begins quite big, but becomes smaller. The latter begins small, but grows bigger.

- Bhartrihariśatakam



Controlling Editor: NAGI REDDI

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS - THE RIGHT WAY

"The last Christian died on the cross," said Fredrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher. By "the last Christian" he meant Jesus Christ. The philosopher wanted to drive home the point that nobody has been a true Christian after him — the first Christian. Jesus stood for love, tolerance, sympathy and faith. Mankind is far from realising these qualities.

What the philosopher said about Christ can be said about almost all the great spiritual masters we have known. After the master, his teaching gets mixed up with other ideas which are not always relevant to his ideals.

The early Christians chose the 25th of December to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ because on that day the people were accustomed to go festive and make merry. A festival might not seem relevant to the ideals of Jesus, yet there is nothing wrong in joyously celebrating the birth of one without whom the world would be much poorer. But if we remember Christ only for the festival, that would be utterly wrong. We must remember him for the sake of his ideals. That would be celebrating the Christmas the right way.

While the great masters take strides on the path of light, mankind limps behind them. But even limping is better than just lying asleep forever in the dungeon of darkness.

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NEWS

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Laugh Your Way to Health

The latest research says that laughter is not only a cure for many diseases, but also a preventive. Without laughter people would get sick more often and more severely, according to Dr. William Fry of the Psychiatry Department of Stanford University Medical School. "Humour stirs the insides and gets the endocrine systems going," he says, "which can be quite beneficial in alleviating disease," reports the *American Science Digest*.



A Cousin for Nessie?

According to Beijing newspapers "a strange beast . . . about the size of a house, with a long neck and small head" has been sighted in a lake in Central Tibet.

This latest monster to be reported resembles—what appears from the description—the Loch Ness monster or *Nessie* of Scotland. Are they cousins?

Kapil Dev 16 stumps on the penultimate day, having gained a first lead of 15. Karan at 800 for Carlton S. himself to Saldhar mind and the scores.

...one between Poona and M.S. quite interesting. Poona points to 41, but it had a strong threat from ... before winning ... (14-30) at half ... put up a splendid ... the third quarter and ... the way to ...

participants. In the girls South Korea took beating Japan in a South India qualified in second world championships to be held ...

A Strange Death-wish

Jatinga, a village eight km away from Haflong in Assam becomes the valley of doom for birds once every year, between September and November. They come and dash against lamps and fires and die. This year experts caught them before their death-dash; but they refused to eat and gave up their lives. They include egrets, water-hens, Bengal florigam, the emerald dove, green pigeon, parakeet, woodpeckers, bulbuls and king-fishers—thousands of them.

The phenomenon first noticed in 1905 still remains baffling.



The Biggest Crossword

The biggest-ever crossword has been prepared by two Frenchmen, Guy Brouty and Jean Louise. It is five metres high and three metres wide. One must write 18,000 words in 50,000 squares to solve it.

Continuing our Fairy Tale Novella

THE LEGEND OF THE GOLDEN VALLEY

—By Manoj Das

(Story so far: In the Golden Valley, an earthquake has brought to light a wonderful image in gold. To find the secret of her life, the young Raju goes out into unknown lands and meets with strange experiences, while the king of the Golden Valley, in his effort to breath life into her through magic, has become a false wizard's captive. Raju has just arrived in a land inhabited by beings who have human forms, but who are supernatural.)

11. STAR-FRUIT ON THE BLUE MOUNTAIN

Raju stopped singing and looked at the smiling girl, no less amazed then she was.

"Please go on, please!" said the girl impatiently.

Raju gazed at the girl, almost unable to take his eyes off her.

"Is it not rather strange?" he murmured at last.

"What is strange?"

"I see you for the first ever time, isn't it so? But your smile seems so familiar to me! Did you ever visit my land known as the Golden Valley?" asked Raju.

The girl giggled. "No. I had had never any need for going out of my own valley. Don't you find this valley quite beautiful?" she asked in her turn.

"I could not have imagined

a more beautiful land. Wait, I have just remembered something interesting. I often escaped into the forest and passed hours playing there amidst bushes and brooks. A very colourful bird would come down as though tearing through the clouds and perch in a tree. It would go on repeating: "In a faraway land there is a princess—a princess!" At last that is what its trilling meant to me. At once a smiling face would float before my vision. You remind me of that vision."

"Is that so? Of course, I am the princess of this land. But I have often heard in my sleep the kind of sound you were making with your voice now. How much I have wanted to do

something similar! But I am told that in the land beyond there is a deity. Unless we receive a boon from her we just cannot do it. And none of us can cross over there for the boon!" she said with a sigh.

"But I was only singing!"

"Only singing? I wish I could do that only once—for all my worth!" cried out the princess.

"I don't understand why you don't sing! Your voice is so sweet!"

"We cannot sing! That virtue is not given to us! Perhaps nobody else in our land yearns for it either. But I'd love to sing."

Raju sat amazed. Before him sat the princess who looked like a superb song changed into a girl! Yet she could not sing! None in her land could.

He remembered that they were not human beings, after all!

He also remembered what the hermit once told him. "No animal can ever talk. But look at men. They can talk; but instead of truly talking, some of them hiss like serpents, some gibber on like the apes and some like to bark—all in the name of talking!"

Raju now realised how lucky men were. They could smile, they could sing, they could dare





do wonders. But something renders all their powers and virtues meaningless. The hermit said—that was ignorance.

"O Princess, to tell you in confidence, I am out to meet the deity of the land beyond. But I do not know the way. Will you please show it to me? I promise to bring for you the boon that would enable you to sing!" said Raju.

"Let me also tell you in confidence that atop the blue mountain yonder there is a unique plant that bears a fruit a year called the star fruit. If one eats that one can cross into the land beyond," said the princess.

"Why any of you have never eaten the fruit?"

The princess laughed. "We do not eat as you human beings do," she revealed with a smile.

"Don't you say so! How do you grow? How you get strength for walking and talking?" asked Raju, rather puzzled, for he knew that the princess would never lie.

"We grow just as flowers grow; we derive strength from the sunlight and the breeze. Why, do you feel hungry here?"

"No, I don't, indeed. In any case, you can eat the fruit even though you did not feel hungry!"

"We cannot. In this land one just cannot do what one ought not to do," explained the princess.

A deer was running by. The princess shouted at it, "Deer dear, will you find out if the plant on the blue mountain has borne its fruit for the year?"

The deer at once climbed the nearest hillock. It stood on its hind legs, yet its eyes did not reach the plant on the blue mountain. At a hint from it, a rabbit climbed on its head and stretched its neck to survey the plant, but in vain. At a hint from it, a squirrel climbed onto

its head, but since it too could not see the plant, it called up a bird on a tree at hand. the bird trilled the message out to an eagle that was circling above. The eagle made a dive to and fro the star plant and sent down the information, "The fruit should be ripe in a day!"

"Excellent. You can be here for a day and then eat the fruit and brave into the land beyond," the princess told Raju.

Raju had amazing experiences during his short stay there. He understood that it was the land of the ever-content. No doubt, the dwellers of the land had surprising powers. They could command the hue of the moonlight—whether it should be bluish or greenish or golden or silvery. They dreamt of only charming things and if they painted their dreams and if they so wished, the paintings sprang to life. Thus they had novel castles, beautiful lakes surrounded by trees abounding in flowers, and any number of strange things. The things did not last, but they had no regrets. They could go on dreaming, imagining, and making new combinations and fanciful situations.

But Raju felt rather bored



with the atmosphere while he felt enamoured of the princess. The beings of this land of contentment could never do anything unexpected. They never feared any worse, but they could not also hope for any better. Raju got the impression that they did not even know what hope is.

While the princess was leading him to the peak of the blue mountain, Raju said remorsefully, "We human beings can do a lot of things which you sweet happy creatures cannot think of. We can hope for the impossible, aspire for the most beautiful, and dare the dange-

rous. But the unfortunate fact about us is, we use our freedom and capacity often for doing things ugly."

"But men can change, can't they?" asked the princess.

"They can, if they will. But queer though it may sound, they are in love with their ignorance—as the hermit told me."

The sun had just risen. The land of contentment wore a serene look. On the blue mountain the lone plant bore a solitary fruit. It twinkled like a star. The princess plucked it and gave it to Raju.

"Down there is the frontier of the other realm—your desti-

nation. But the frontier is continuously whipped by storm. A moment does not pass without lightning striking the rocks. Boulders spiral up in whirlwind, to be dashed to dust. The gorges are either dark as ebony or are dazzled by a weird light. If you eat this fruit, and go forward, nature in her elements cannot hurt you. But there are supernatural powers who can harm—the moment you are afraid of them. If you do not let fear creep into you, you need not care for them at all!" said the princess, bidding good-bye to Raju.

To Continue.....



WORLD MYTHOLOGY

MOSES AND HIS MISSION (III)



Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt—as directed by God—towards the Chosen Land. They numbered six lakhs.

Soon the Egyptian king repented for letting the Israelites out. He sent his army to bring them back. They were resting near the Red Sea.



Directed by God, Moses stepped into the sea, his hands raised high. The sea parted. His people crossed to the other side.



But as soon as the Egyptian army entered the passage, the sea broke forth on them. They were drowned.





As the Israelites camped at the foot of a hill in the desert Sinai, there was thunder and lightning on the hill.



Moses climbed the hill and met his God there. He gave him the Ten Commandments.

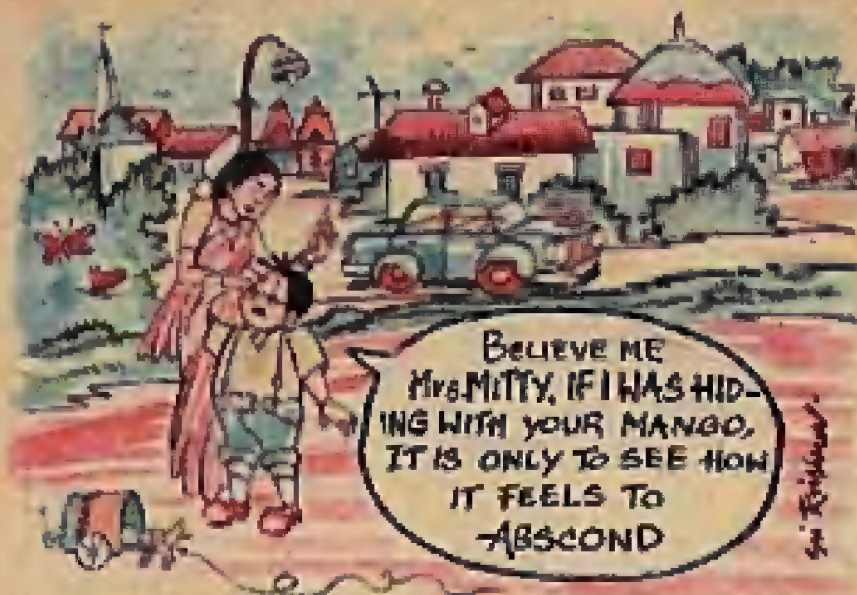
Moses came down with the Commandments which were to govern the life of his nation. He gave them to the people.



The Chosen Land was visible on the horizon, when, on a hill-top, Moses breathed his last, completing his mission.

(Concluded)

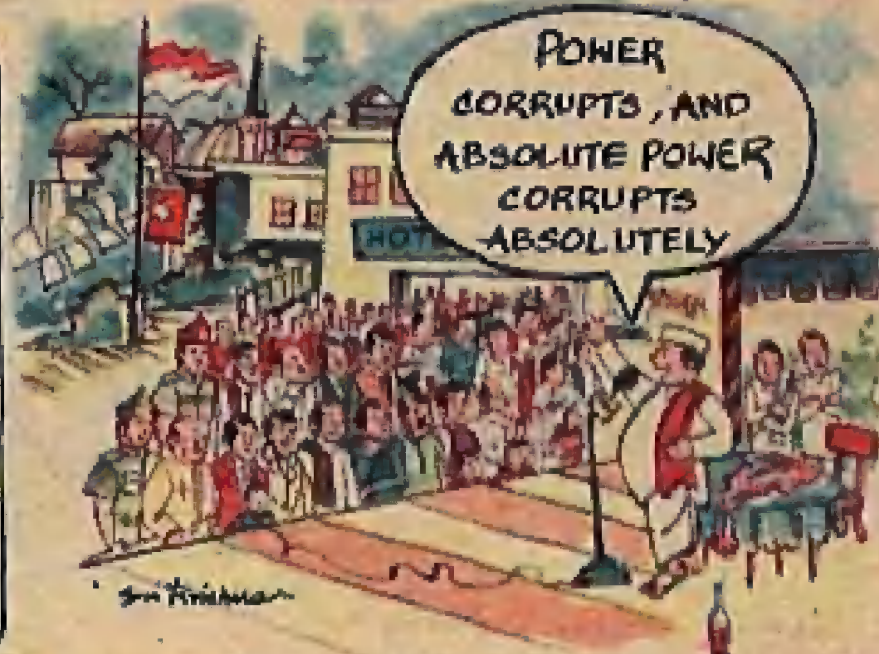




CHANDAMAMA DICTIONARY OF SELECT WORDS AND PHRASES

ABSCOND: (V) To go into hiding, often carrying something more valuable than sweetmeat or the other boy's story book. In order to escape punishment.

ABSOLUTE: (Adj) Above all limits or restriction.



THIS IS
AN ORIGINAL
ABSTRACT ART
DRAWN ALL BY
MYSELF

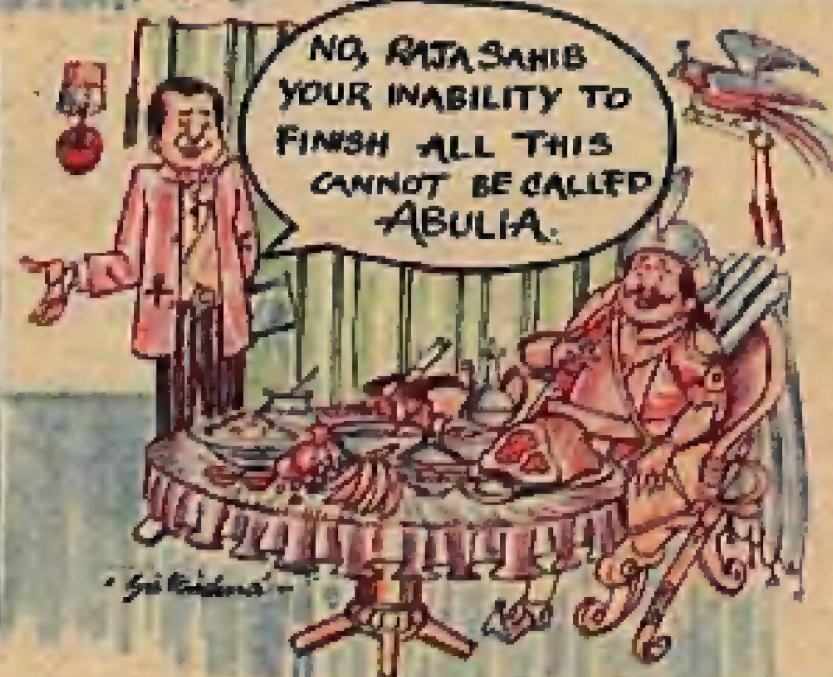


ABSTRACT: (V) To draw, to derive. (N) A summary. "Is this the extract of your speech?" the editor asked the leader. In adj. a vague idea.



ABSURD: (Adj) Something meaningless or ridiculous. But, said Goldsmith, "Every absurdity has a champion to defend it!"

ABULIA: (N) Loss of will power or initiative. Also spelt ABOULIA.



ABYSS: (N) A bottomless pit or hell. Says Milton: "Who shall tempt with wandering feet The dark unbottom'd infinite abyss..."



Prince and the Ogress

The king of Baghdad had a son, clever and handsome. The king loved him very much.

"Father, I have a great desire to see the lands beyond our kingdom. Will you not allow me to go out on a journey?" one day the young prince asked the king.

"Why not, my son!" replied the king. "But the world has good men in it as much as it has wicked ones. Do not go forth alone. Take one of my wise vizirs with you."

The king then asked a vizir

who, he thought, was brave and trustworthy, to accompany the prince. A party of bodyguards and servants, carrying tents, food, and water, followed them.

The prince travelled through picturesque lands and towns and was happy to see people and customs that were new to him. The vizir was always by his side.

One day they camped in a valley. While the prince relaxed inside his tent, the vizir seemed to enjoy a climb up a rock.

"O noble prince, come up if





it to the other side of the hill. The antelope had begun to run. The prince galloped behind it.

It was a long valley with lakes and bushes, but not a soul was to be seen. The prince doubled up, but, even after a long time, could not trace the antelope.

A little before evening he saw a huge castle in ruins. There, leaning against a wall, sat a young woman, weeping. She was extremely beautiful.

How could a solitary beauty come to live in that deserted region?—wondered the prince.

"If you don't mind, I'm curious to know who you are and what makes you sit and weep here, all alone!" said the prince politely, getting off his horse and taking a few steps towards her.

"How happy I am to see another human being in this forlorn land! I am the princess of an eastern kingdom. One evening, three days ago, while I was returning from the river after a bath, a flying genie swooped down upon me and went up holding me in his arm. High above the clouds, after he had flown for some hours, a shooting-star struck him on the back. He went up in flames;

you don't wish to lose a marvellous sight," the vizir said calling out to the prince.

The prince, who was always eager to see things new, hurried up to the vizir.

The vizir pointed his hand at a creature on the other side of the hill. It looked like an antelope.

The prince was fascinated by it, so much so that he could not take his eyes off it.

"I must try to catch it!" he said.

"Do as you please," said the vizir.

The prince came down and hopped onto his horse and led

I fell down here," said the young woman between her sobs.

"Amazing is your story, the like of which I had never heard. Now, I cannot let you perish in this unknown land. If you agree to share my horse, I propose to carry you to my camp and then to my palace. With proper escorts, we will then send you to your parents," said the prince.

The young woman thanked the prince and mounted his horse behind him.

The sun went down and the meadow grew dusky. The prince rode fast, but he could not locate his camp. He had forgotten the way.

Suddenly he smelled some-

thing obnoxious. The smell came from behind him. He heard a spine-chilling giggle. He slowed down and looked over his shoulder. What he saw was most unexpected. The beauty had changed into an ogress. A short glimpse of her face was so horrifying that the prince went dizzy and could have fallen off his horse.

"What happened to you?" asked the ogress.

"You know well that I am in danger!" replied the prince.

"A prince in danger? Why? Cannot you command your army to ward off the danger?" asked the ogress.

"Such is the situation that I cannot!" replied the prince.



"What about your wealth? Can't you use it against the danger?"

"Alas, I can't!"

"What about your reputation?" asked the ogress, giggling.

"That is of no avail to me in the predicament that I am!" replied the prince.

"Who then do you think can come to your rescue? Is there none at all?" demanded the ogress.

"God alone can!" replied the prince, after a moment's thought.

"Why don't you pray to Him?" asked the ogress.

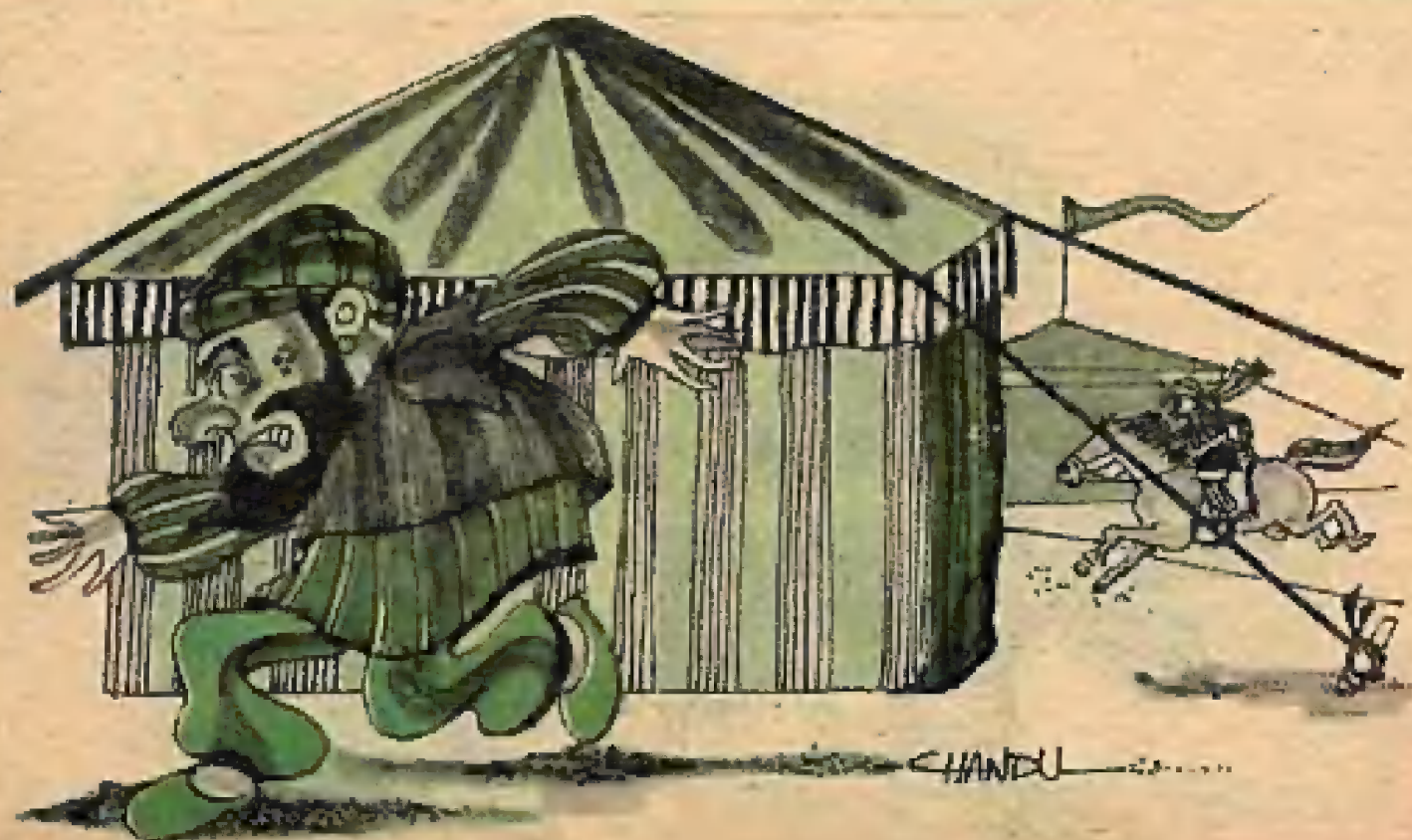
"Save me, O God!" cried out the prince, in his moment of utter helplessness.

Instantly the ogress fell

down. A fire engulfed her just for a moment. What lay on the ground was a heap of ash.

The antelope that had turned into a beauty that turned into an ogress was a supernatural being. It had been employed by the vizir who wanted the prince to die. But the being took pity for the prince and led him, through her questions, to think of God. Thus she saved him from herself!

The prince managed to reach his camp. When the vizir saw him returning, he was so scared that he took to his heels, never to be seen again. The prince, with his party, returned home, rich with experience.



The Bridge on the Ravine

"Where are you going, father?" asked the ten-year-old Albert.

The father, Mr. Speckbacher, did not reply. His eyes glowed in the dusk. His grip became tight on the handle of his polished axe.

As Mr. Speckbacher stepped out of his house, villagers who were waiting for him greeted him. But there was no smile in their greetings. All of them were armed. Some held crow-bars, some held shovels, and

some axes. All looked grim.

The sun had just set and the atmosphere was gloomy. The group of villagers marched towards the ravine.

"Father, where are you going?" Albert repeated his question, shaking the very hand of Mr. Speckbacher that held the axe.

"Look here, boy, we are not out for a picnic. The French are planning to attack our village tonight. We are going to





demolish the bridge as soon as possible," said Mr. Speckbacher. He did not want to hide anything from the boy.

"Let me go with you, father!" said Albert.

"No, no, ours is a dangerous mission," the villagers warned Albert in a chorus. But the boy had already started running ahead of them. The father smiled.

Albert knew the bridge well. It was a tall pine tree, felled, that linked their village with the other side of the ravine. Only one person could cross over it at a time and he had to do it very cautiously. A slip would

mean a headlong plunge into the forceful flow of water at the dark bottom of the deep ravine.

The villagers were still a few metres away from the bridge when the boy returned to them, gasping for breath, and announced that the French were already there on the other side; one of them was trying to cross the bridge while the others observed him.

"Hurry up, all!" shouted Mr. Speckbacher and he ran. He was the leader of the group. The villagers ran behind him.

Their village belonged to the small territory of Tyrol, at the north-east of Italy. For some time fighting was going on between the French and the Tyrolese.

The French soldier who was balancing himself on the robust tree, walking on it from the other side, retreated at the sight of the rushing villagers.

Mr. Speckbacher was the first man to bring his axe down on the bridge at his end. The other villagers joined him.

The French on the opposite side swore and they raised their rifles.

"Quick, my friends, quick," cried out Mr. Speckbacher. A dozen axes were at work, but

the tree was hard and, being the bottom part on this side, was very bulky.

"Fire!"

The French captain's order was followed by a volley of shots.

It was not immediately known how many of the villagers were hit.

"Remember the women and children at home. Imagine what the enemy soldiers would do to your homes if they enter our village. We must destroy the bridge even if we were to die!" said Mr. Speckbacher. He had just finished speaking when the French discharged yet another volley of shots.

Mr. Speckbacher flung his axe with a cry of anguish. He had been hit. As he sprawled on the brink of the ravine, two villagers came forward to lift him. They too fell to the enemy bullets.

The others were still putting in their best to cut down the bridge. But the French did not give them any respite. Bullets continued to strike them.

In the meanwhile other villagers had arrived on the scene. As almost all of the first group had died, the members of the new group took up their



unfinished work.

They too began falling to the French bullets. When half of them had died, the others, panicky, deserted the place.

The sole living person to be left was Albert. He sat by his father's side, weeping, but also observing the work of his elders. He saw that they had narrowed the tree down to its one-fourth. A few more blows should suffice to snap it.

He rose from his father's side, picked up an axe, and began cutting the tree. The French had stepped onto the tree. But Albert went on with his work.

The advancing French retre-

ated again. They resumed shooting. Bullets fell all around Albert, but none hit him.

Only a thin part of the tree still remained. The axe slipped off his tired hands. To look for another axe would mean giving the enemy a little more time to shoot at him. And if he was hit while the bridge still remained unbroken, his mission would fail.

He jumped onto the thin link and kicked it as hard as he could. The French reloaded their rifles and took aim at him again. But instantly the bridge snapped. Along with the tree the little Albert went down the

dark ravine. There was a loud splash in the darkness below.

The French stood undone. There was no chance for them to cross into the village. They returned to their camp.

Next day the French were engaged in a battle with the Tyrolese army in another front. Albert's village remained safe.

But the French captain and some of their officers had been so much struck by Albert's heroism that they erected a memorial to him at the foot of the hill there—over his dead-body that had been found floating the next day.





Meeting A Ghost

This happened long ago. On the river Kalindi was a small village. Sulochana was the most charming girl in the village.

In the same village lived a man called Nandan. He was wealthy. When he was a middle-aged man, his wife died. He proposed to marry Sulochana.

Sulochana's parents agreed to Nandan's proposal. Sulochana was not at all willing to marry Nandan, but nobody paid any heed to her murmurs.

Sulochana confided to her friends that she intended to die.

A day before the marriage was to be solemnised, Sulochana was missing. She had been last seen going to the river. When a search was made, the jar she carried to the river was found abandoned on the river-bank.

It was concluded that Sulo-

chana had drowned herself in the river.

Her parents and well-wishers wept and repented for disregarding her wishes. But it was too late to do anything.

Nandan married a girl from the neighbouring village. Her name was Leela and she was quite submissive by nature. Days passed.

Leela had never seen Sulochana, but she had heard how beautiful and intelligent she was. Leela often sat on the river-bank and thought of Sulochana.

One evening, on her return from the river, Leela was found looking pale and panicky. "What's the matter with you?" asked her mother-in-law.

"In the dusk the branches of the banian tree on the river-bank shook as I was passing under them," said Leela. She ad-



But Leela grew thin. She gave birth to a child, but it died.

"I'm afraid, the ghost has not yet forgotten Leela. We must call the exorcist again," said her mother-in-law.

Leela cried out in horror. Nandan said that he was not willing to have his wife treated by the exorcist once again. Although he too was sure that Sulochana's ghost was the cause of his wife's suffering, he knew that the exorcist will cause her no less suffering.

"Go out on a pilgrimage. A visit to holy places is sure to free your wife from the ghost's evil eye," said an elderly man.

The idea appealed to Nandan. He set out on a pilgrimage.

After visiting a number of places, the couple reached Varanasi. The bundle containing their clothes and money was stolen from an inn. They felt helpless. They had no means for buying even a meal!

A local man heard their sorrow and advised Nandan to meet a merchant named Pravir. "He comes from your state. He loves to help people in their difficulty," informed the man.

It was not difficult to find the way to Pravir's house. While Nandan talked to Pravir, Leela

mitted to having got frightened.

"It's no mystery to me. The unlucky Sulochana's ghost was trying to attack you. She is jealous of you," commented her mother-in-law.

"Sulochana's ghost!!" shrieked out Leela. She now began to shiver.

Her mother-in-law shook her head meaningfully. Soon she sent for an exorcist. He came the next morning and lighted a fire and chanted strange hymns. The smoke smelled obnoxious. Leela was compelled to inhale it. She was much tormented.

Her relatives thought that the ghost of Sulochana had left her.

entered his house and sought out his wife.

Leela told Pravir's wife all her problems. She did not hide the fact that Sulochana's ghost was troubling her.

Pravir's wife asked her to wait. She entered her room and came out after taking off her ornaments and changing into a plain saree. She then called Nandan in.

Nandan looked at Pravir's wife with surprise writ large on his face. Pravir's wife smiled.

"You recognise me, don't you? well, I'm supposed to be the ghost that is troubling your wife!" said Pravir's wife. Need-

less to say, she was Sulochana.

Nandan stood speechless. Leela felt bewildered.

Sulochana told her story:

She was indeed going to drown herself when Pravir saw her. Pravir's house was near Sulochana's maternal uncle's house and both knew each other when they were small. Pravir had opened his business in Varanasi and was going to his village to find a bride for himself.

Pravir heard Sulochana's woes and said, "You will be a sinner to kill yourself. You will make me the happiest man if you marry me. What do you choose to do?"





Sulochana blushed. Pravir smiled and carried her on his horse straight to Varanasi where they got married.

"Now you see—don't you?—that I left no ghost on the river-

bank. It is your fear and your mother-in-law's and others' suggestion that had made you suffer. Please be in our house for a few days. Everything will be all right," said Sulochana lovingly.

SPOT THE TEN DIFFERENCES



THE GIANT CRAB AND THE ELEPHANTS

There was a lake covering a large area below the Himalaya. It was always full. Its cool water looked as clear as glass and tasted fine. Lotuses made the lake quite inviting.

Nearby, in the forest, lived a horde of elephants. To a couple among them was born the Bodhisattva.

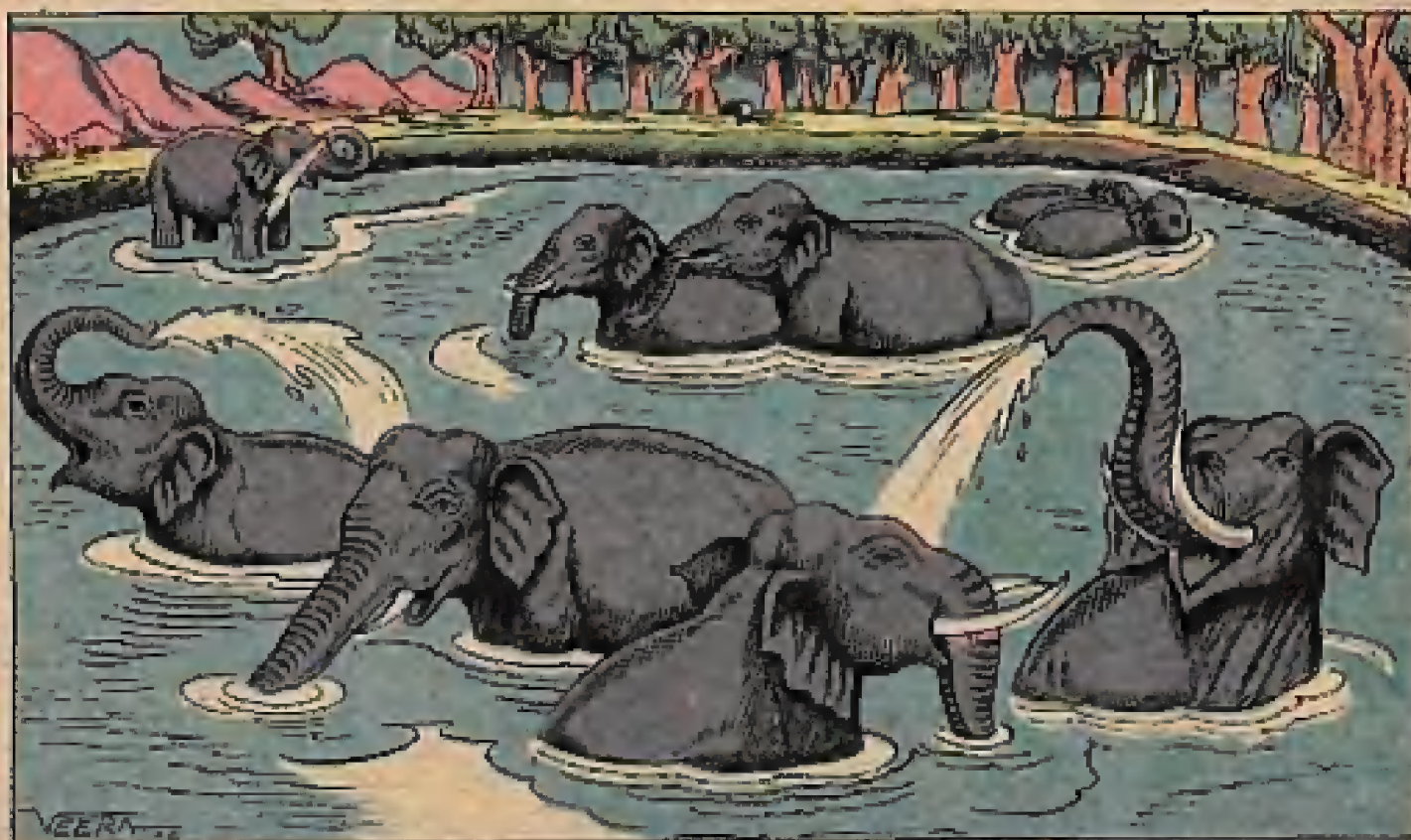
The Bodhisattva grew up into a strong and intelligent young elephant. He began visiting many places with the senior members of the horde. He saw several small pools from which

they drank and in which they bathed.

One day he wandered alone and found the large lake. He looked at it with joy—but felt a bit baffled too. If such a nice lake was there so near their forest, why did the seniors never come to bathe in it or drink from it?

“Don’t enter the lake!” shouted an elderly elephant who saw the young one venturing towards it.

“Why? What’s wrong with this lake?” he asked. The





elderly elephant hemmed and hawed, but did not give a clear answer.

The Bodhisattva returned to his parents. "Why don't you ever enter the large lake?" he asked. His parents had to tell him the reason:

In that pond lived a red giant-crab. He was huge in size and ferocious by nature. He had killed and eaten up many elephants in the past. That is why the seniors in the horde had decided never to let any elephant go near it.

The young elephant was shocked at hearing this. But he kept quiet.

A year or two passed and he was married to a nice cow-elephant. However, he could not forget the fact that a mere crab kept the mighty elephants terrorised. Besides, the wicked crab had killed many elephants for which he ought to be punished.

He talked to several elderly elephants who knew about the crab's method of attack. It did not attack an elephant when he entered the lake. But when he turned to climb to the shore, it caught one of his hind legs in its powerful tongs and slowly dragged him into the deep waters. The elephant would be drowned. Then the giant-crab would eat his flesh.

If a number of elephants entered the lake, the crab attacked only the last one.

The young elephant told all the members of the horde: "It is a shame to live in fear of a crab. Do as I say. We will surely vanquish the giant-crab. You have nothing to fear. The crab attacks the last one of the returning elephants. I will be the last one."

He persuaded the horde to enter the lake. They drank to their hearts' content and ate the lotus-stems. The giant-crab waited patiently. When the

young elephant began plodding towards the bank after all the other elephants had left the waters, the crab caught one of his hind legs and tried to drag him backward.

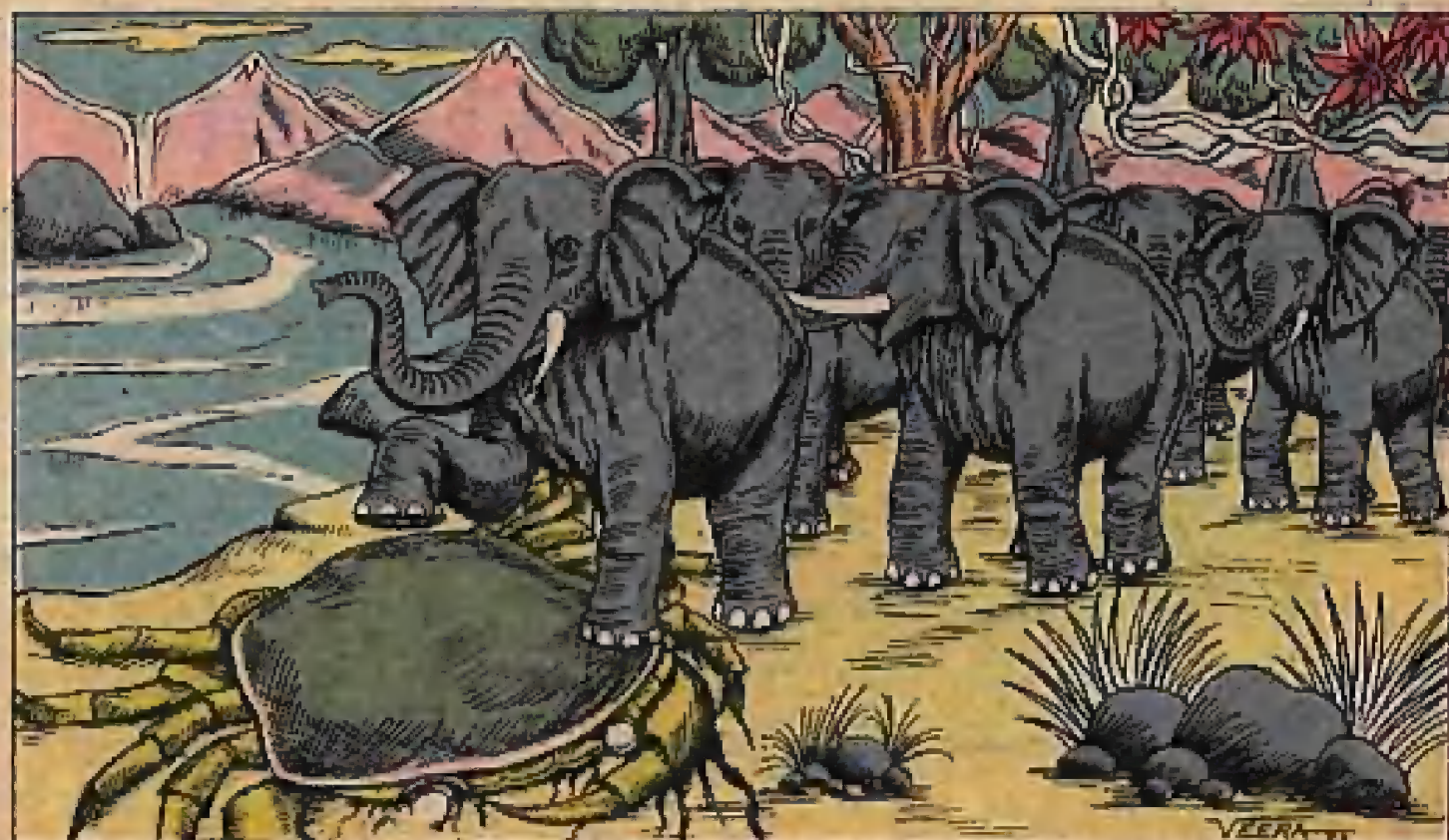
The young elephant gave out a sharp cry. His wife, who was just ahead of him, said, addressing the crab: "O Giant-Crab, what a clever and courageous creature you are! Would you please tell me how many elephants you have killed to your credit?"

The cow-elephant's address quite pleased the crab. In his bid to answer her, he let go the hind leg of her husband.

Instantly the young elephant raised his heavy foot and brought it forcefully down on the giant-crab's back. The crab's back cracked. The injured crab could not escape. The young elephant gave out a cry of joy. The other elephants re-entered the lake and hauled the crab up the bank and trampled it to pieces.

The monsoon came. The river was in spate. The lake overflowed and carried away the two huge claws of the giant-crab into the river. Those who got them made two drums out of them—and they were famous drums of a bygone era!

From the Buddha Jatakas



The Reward in Advance

A farmer once met a landlord of a far away village and appealed for a loan of three thousand rupees.

"Were you unable to raise a loan from anybody else?" asked the landlord.

"Sir, I am able to obtain loan even from the greatest miser. But I thought of asking you because you are a noble-hearted man," replied the farmer.

"You boast of your capacity to obtain a loan even from the most miserly of men. Well, can you get it from the landlord of Raghavpur? If you can, I shall reward you with a gold bangle that costs four thousand rupees," said the landlord.

"Sir, I'm sure, I'll succeed. But it will be difficult for me to come all the way from Raghavpur to obtain my reward. I propose that you hand over the reward to me in advance. Let one of your men accompany me. If I fail, he will recover the bangle from me," proposed the farmer.

The landlord agreed to it. The farmer proceeded with the bangle and two companions. He pledged the bangle to the landlord of Raghavpur and obtained the loan.





STORY OF INDIA-60

PRITHVIRAJ AND SAMYUKTA (1)

In the 11th century there were four great Hindu dynasties ruling the country from Delhi, Ajmer, Gujarat and Kanauj, among other dynasties. Their capitals hummed with cultural and commercial activities.

Delhi was then ruled by a charming young king, Prithviraj. The King of Ajmer was his maternal grandfather. The old king, who had no son, chose Prithviraj his successor and blessed him while dying.

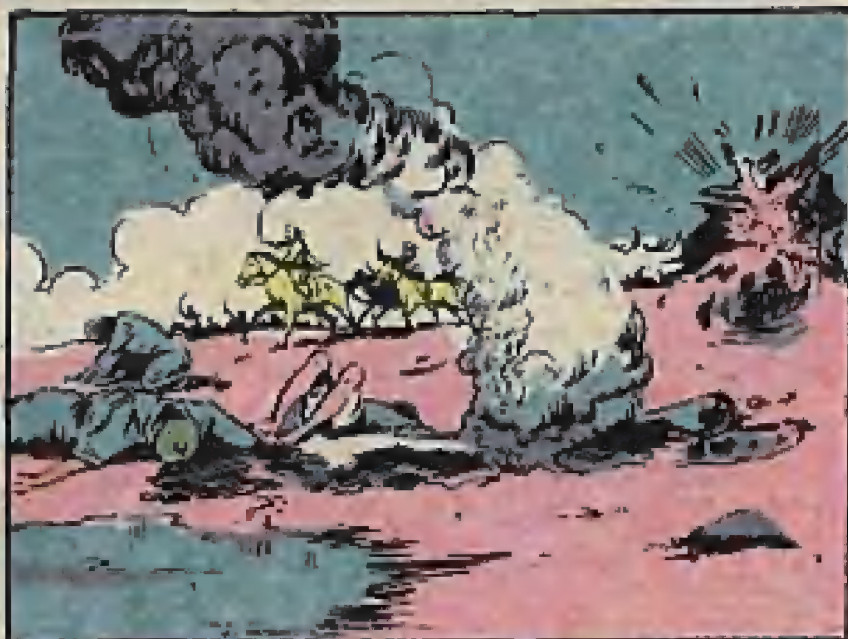


Jaichandra, the King of Kanauj who had married the late king's sister, felt disappointed, for he coveted the throne of Ajmer. But Prithviraj was esteemed for his nobility as much as feared for his bravery. Jaichandra could not challenge him.



The coronation of Prithviraj was performed to everybody's joy. He now became the king of two vast domains—Delhi and Ajmer. He ruled with courage and conscience.

Muhammad Ghuri, of Ghur in Afghanistan, was bent upon conquering Delhi. He struck six times, but the young Prithviraj defeated him every time. Other Rajput kings helped Prithviraj, but not Jalchandra.



Once Muhammad Ghuri was taken prisoner. Generals of Prithviraj made fun of him proposing to dress him up as a woman and sending him back in a palanquin to his home. Ghuri the prisoner was badly humiliated.

Prithviraj, however, set him free honourably, asking him not to do any more mischief in the frontiers. Muhammad Ghuri, who could have been killed, thanked Prithviraj for the leniency and courtesy.



Jaichandra, the King of Kanauj, had a daughter named Samyukta. She was as beautiful as she was intelligent. For her charm her name had become well-known in all the royal Rajput families of the country.

Jaichandra, deciding to marry her off, announced her Swayamvara. He invited all the eligible princes, but not Prithviraj. Prithviraj remembered her well. Years ago he had seen her in the palace at Ajmer.





When preparations for Samyukta's marriage were complete, battle broke out and at the request of some princes, the Swayamvara was postponed. The people of Kanauj were informed of it through the beating of drum and the invitees through messengers.

The chivalrous Prithviraj, agrieved at Jaichandra's conduct and fondly remembering Samyukta, decided to act. He met an old woman who had been his nurse and told him about his love for Samyukta.



The affectionate nurse promised to do her best to inspire in Samyukta's heart tender feelings for Prithviraj. A caravan of merchants was proceeding to Ajmer. The old nurse joined it, hopeful of her mission.

(To continue)

The Hint

The King of Devpur sought his guru's advice on every vital matter.

Once an important position in the court lay vacant. There were two candidates for the post, Rama Mishra and Hari Mishra.

The king sent both the candidates to his guru. The guru talked to them for a while. Then he gave one of them a sieve and the other a winnowing fan and sent them back to the king.

"What does the guru mean by this?" the king asked his minister.

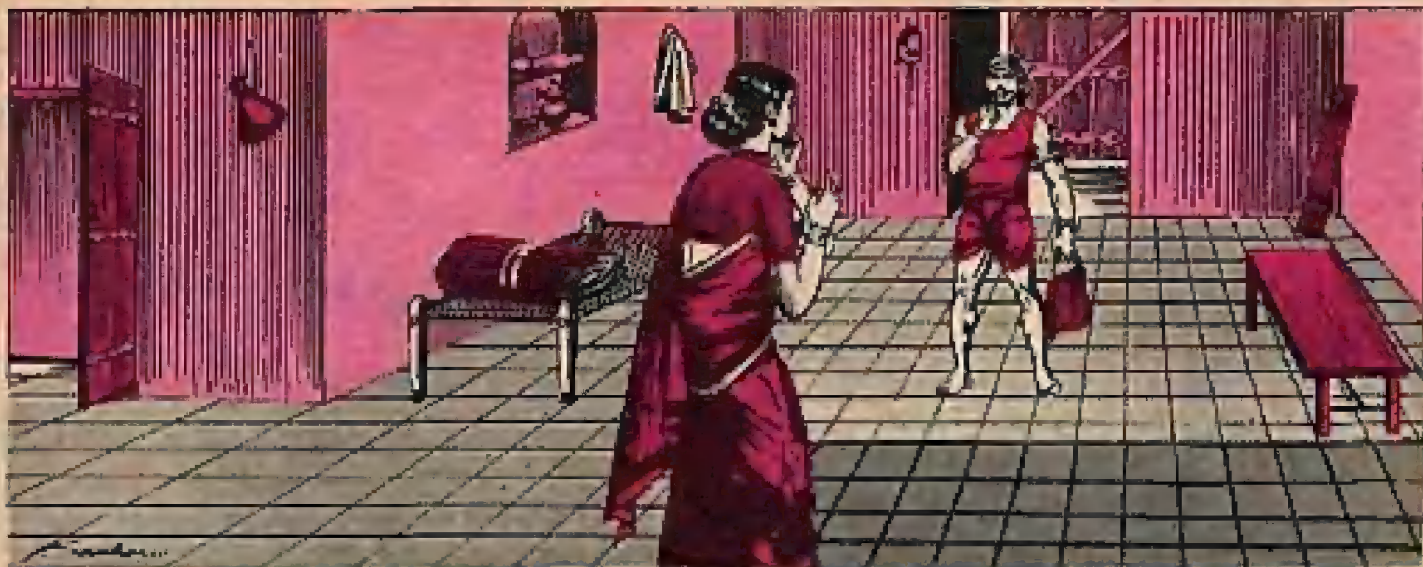
The minister said that he would reflect on it and let the king know his interpretation the next day.

The minister, thoughtful, returned home. He saw his wife sifting corn in a winnowing fan. A minute later he saw her sifting flour in a sieve.

Next day he told the king, "My lord, one who brought the winnowing fan would retain the useful things and reject the useless. One who brought the sieve would retain the useless things and reject the useful."

The king employed the candidate who had come with the winnowing fan.





A Bargain In Darkness

It was evening. Maya was alone at home. Suddenly someone stormed into her house. He made a sign asking her to keep silent.

The intruder looked like a thief. Maya was afraid.

Once inside the house, the intruder heaved a sigh of relief. Then he closed all the windows. He kept on casting threatening glances at Maya.

Maya had no doubt left in his mind that the fellow himself was afraid of somebody and was hiding in her house. Slowly she got over her fear. The door remained unlocked. Any moment she can run away. She can even lock the door from outside.

"It seems somebody is chasing you. Is that so?" she gathered enough courage to ask the intruder.

"That is none of your business. Will you like to buy a costly silk saree?" asked the thief in his turn. He drew out of his bag a fine silk saree.

Maya's face brightened up. She very much desired to have a new silk saree. The previous evening she had told her husband about it. He had expressed his displeasure over her demand and she had shed tears.

"How much do you expect for this?" asked Maya.

"It costs a thousand rupees. But as you can guess, I have stolen it. In fact I snatched it

from someone's hand as soon as he paid for it in a shop. I want to get rid of it soon. You can give me five hundred rupees," said the thief.

"I can give you only two hundred. That is all I have," said Maya.

Just then there was a knock on Maya's door. The thief hid inside her kitchen. Maya went near the door.

"Did you see a stranger trying to hide somewhere here?" asked two policemen.

Maya saw that she had nothing to gain from helping the police to nab the thief. "No," she replied.

The policemen went away. The thief came out of his hiding. "Where is your two hundred rupees?" he asked.

Maya brought out the amount. She had managed to

accumulate that much over two years.

The thief received the money and threw it into his bag. Then, instead of giving Maya the saree, he gave her a rude push. She fell down. He escaped.

Maya got up and came out. All was dark. She sighed and wiped her eyes.

Her husband was back soon. He sat down on the bedstead and said ruefully, "Perhaps you are not destined to wear a costly silk saree. I bought one for you paying nine hundred rupees. As I came out to the street, a thief snatched it and ran away. I reported it to some policemen who were nearby. They gave him a chase, but to no avail.

He wiped his face.

It was with great difficulty that Maya checked herself from swooning away.





*New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire*

FICKLE MOODS

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. Gusts of wind, along with frequent showers, howled in the nearby forest. Flashes of lightning showed fearful faces and, from time to time, the moaning of jackals was subdued by eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down.

But as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying astride on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse said, "O King, you seem to be in a spirited mood now. But who can say if your mood won't change by morning? Let me narrate a story to show how fickle is human mood. Pay attention to it, O King. That is likely to bring you some relief."

The vampire went on: Bhu-shan and Prabhakar were bro-

thers. Both were farmers and lived separately. Unfortunately they came to dislike each other. Soon relationship between the two grew very bitter.

One afternoon a herd of cattle entered Bhushan's field. Prabhakar saw it from his land, but he did not try to drive away the animals. However, before they had done much harm to Bhushan's crop, the cowherd boy appeared there and began to lead them away.

Just then Bhushan arrived. He was quite annoyed that Prabhakar did not interfere with the animals. He gave vent to his anger by planting a slap on the cowherd's cheek.

"If anything, the cowherd deserved thanks. Had he not acted promptly, the cattle would have made a short work of the crop. But look at my brother's conduct. He beat up the poor cowherd," Prabhakar commented before all and sundry.

Bhushan heard the comment. That angered him even more.

A week later Prabhakar was returning from his field with his cart. One of his bullocks hit a boulder and fell down. Prabhakar shouted for help. Villagers gathered and removed the injured bullock and put another



in its place.

Bhushan saw his plight, but did not extend a helping hand. "The proud fellow was finding fault with me the other day. See how he is humbled now!" he told a neighbour. Prabhakar heard it to his disgust.

Hatred was not confined to the two brothers. It spread on to their wives too. There was no dearth of women in the village to instigate one against the other and see the fun!

One day Prabhakar's wife was seen with a pair of new ear-rings. "Well, if we know how to earn, we also know how to spend!" she told some of the women.



casting a scornful look at Bhushan's wife who was passing by.

"Who does not know how to spend?" shouted out Bhushan's wife a fortnight later in a voice that was loud enough to reach Prabhakar's wife. Bhushan's wife had adorned herself with a gold necklace in the meanwhile.

"How beautiful it is!" said some women.

"It looks beautiful to you because your eyes are good. But there is at least one woman in the village who won't even look at it!" said Bhushan's wife.

"True, I do not look at imitation things," commented Prabhakar's wife when she heard

what Bhushan's wife had to say.

Days passed unhappily for both the families.

It was a stormy night. Strong wind was blowing for hours. The village lay prostrate under threatening clouds.

Suddenly a chunk of the thatch on Prabhakar's house was blown away. Prabhakar feared that his mud wall might collapse. He wanted to cover the thatchless portion with a tarpaulin.

While he worked alone standing on his roof, a crack of thunder deafened him and blazing lightning blinded him. He fell down.

His wife came running out to the open and shouted for him. But she got no response. She burst into a wail and ran into Bhushan's house and broke down in her sister-in-law's arms.

"I'm afraid, some danger has befallen Prabhakar. Go and find him out at once!" Bhushan's wife told Bhushan.

Bhushan rushed out. He located Prabhakar lying in a swoon under a tree that was about to fall. Bhushan was strong enough to lift him in his arms and carry him into his house. Had he delayed, Prabhakar would have been crushed

by the tree that fell uprooted the next moment.

Bhushan then braved the storm and returned with a physician. He and his wife nursed Prabhakar till the latter recovered fully.

"I'd have been a corpse had my brother not come to my rescue at once!" Prabhakar was heard telling the villagers.

"Had anything grievously bad happened to Prabhakar, I'd have lost all the zest for life!" Bhushan was heard saying.

The two brothers were no more heard speaking ill of each other. Their well-wishers were pleasantly surprised.

The vampire paused for a moment and then demanded of King Vikram: "O King, what was the true nature of the relationship between Bhushan and Prabhakar? No doubt, they hated each other for years. What then impelled Bhushan to go to Prabhakar's rescue immediately? Why did he and his wife so sincerely nurse him? Answer me, if you can. Should you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answer, your head would roll off your neck!"

Answered King Vikram forthwith: "Love and hatred are passions that exist side by side. When



two brothers begin to hate each other, they do so bitterly. It is because basically theirs is a relationship of love. Each thinks that to get love and understanding from the other is his birth right. When their expectations are not fulfilled, they grow intolerant of each other.

"Ordinarily, people are happy to give vent to some emotion or the other. Those who are extremely noble, find happiness only in speaking good of others and wishing well of others. The average man gets as much satisfaction from a good happening as from a bad happening—when it concerns



others. People of lower nature find happiness only in seeing ill in others and in gloating over them.

"Bhushan and Prabhakar were average men. Once they got back the lost taste of love, they did not wish to lose it again. After all, love is stronger than hatred.

"The reason for Bhushan for-

getting his own safety in going to Prabhakar's rescue is simple. Every elder brother has a sense of duty towards the younger brother. Even if that sense is suppressed at one time, it comes out at another time."

No sooner had the king concluded his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.



"Can you name five things that contain milk?" asked the teacher.

"Ice cream, tea, coffee, *payasam*" Raman stopped.

"Yes!" the teacher encouraged him. Raman's face brightened up. "Our refrigerator, and our neighbour's cow!" he completed his answer.



A HOLY DIP

If Indradas was the richest man in the village, he was also the most greedy man in an area of twenty villages! He loaned out money to the needy who pledged their lands or ornaments to him. If they failed to repay the loans on time, Indradas forfeited their property.

Once Somnath, a neighbour of Indradas, was in need of money badly. A plot of fertile land that belonged to Somnath lay bordering Indradas's land. Indradas coveted that land. When Somnath asked him for a loan, he said, "My brother, I have hardly any cash left with me after my son's marriage. But, for your sake, I am willing to borrow from my friend in the

town and pass the amount on to you."

Somnath knew too well that what Indradas had spent on the occasion of his son's marriage was no more than a month's income—and he had received much more!

However, there was no arguing with Indradas. Somnath, at Indradas's clever hint, pledged the plot of land that bordered his and received the loan.

Two years passed. Monsoons failed the farmers. Somnath could not pay back the loan.

"Now the land becomes mine!" announced Indradas at the beginning of the third year.

"Kindly allow me a year more, my brother!" Somnath

pleaded with him.

"How can I? Did I not borrow for your sake from a friend? He is pestering me for it! Since I have no money for paying him, I am obliged to transfer to his name a small plot of land I have in the town. How can I explain my conduct to my son if I do not take possession of your pledged land in turn?" asked Indradas.

"I am responsible to my son, am I not?" Indradas said again. that was his way of excusing himself.

Somnath understood that pleading with Indradas was of no use. He kept quiet.

A week passed. It was an auspicious day. To have a dip in the river on that day was highly beneficial, said the astrologers. Indradas decided to reap the benefit. He walked towards the river.

But there were a number of beggars on the river-bank. Besides, the villagers were asking the people for donations for constructing a durable *ghat* with stone steps to facilitate bathing in the future.

Deciding to avoid them, Indradas walked a furlong and reached a desolate spot.

But little did he know that the water there was deep. He



stepped on a submerged stone. It was loose and slippery. He fell into the deep water.

He did not know swimming. He was about to drown. "Save me! I'm dying!" he cried out.

It so happened that Somnath was passing by. He lost no time in taking a plunge into the river and dragging Indradas ashore.

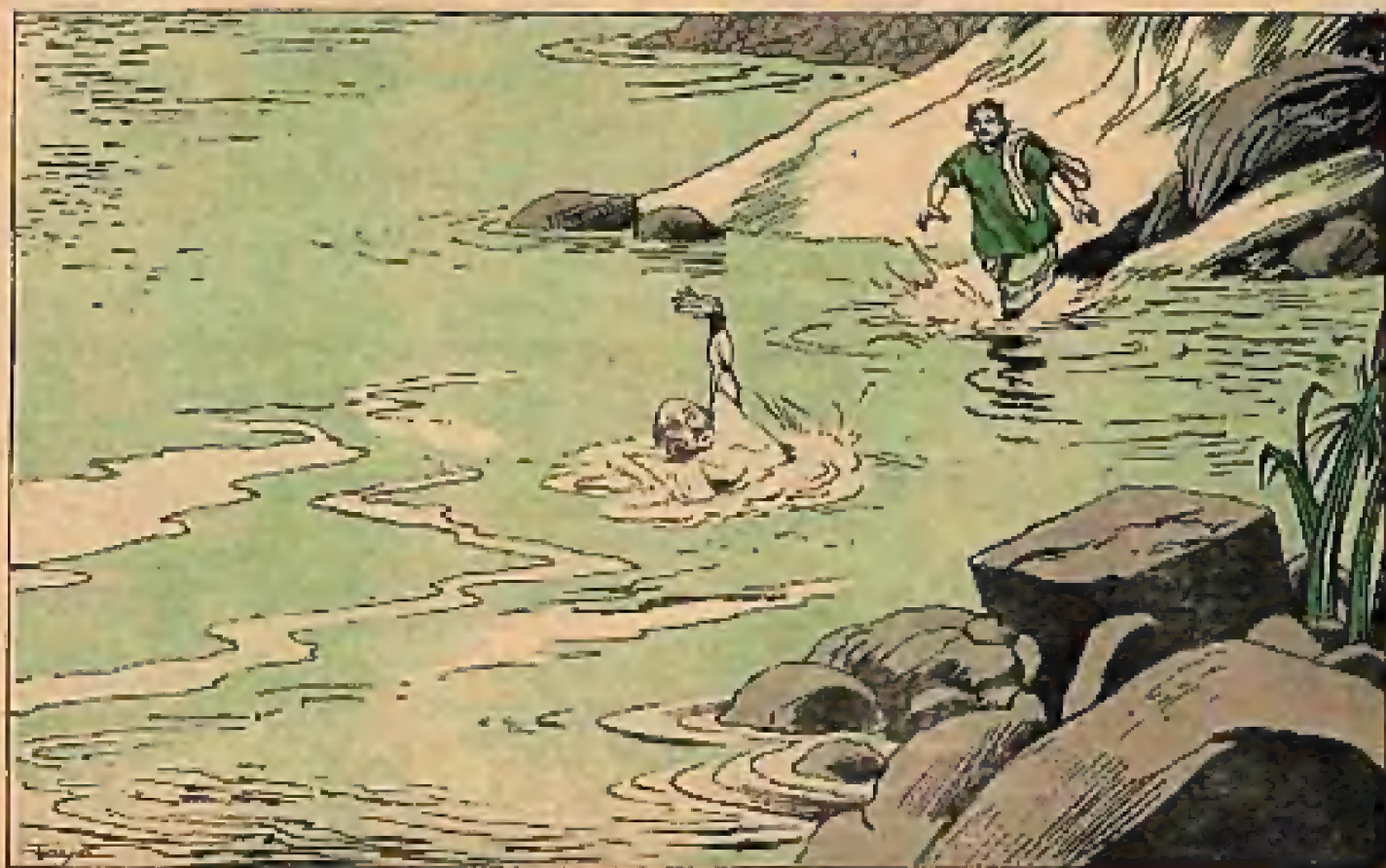
But Indradas had broken one of his ankles. He could not walk. Somnath carried him to his home. Leaving him, Somnath went out and soon returned with the village physician.

The physician did his best, but Indradas found no relief from pain. Soon he was down

with high temperature.

Days passed without any sign of improvement in Indradas's condition. One night he overheard his daughter-in-law asking his son: "How long would your father go on suffering? He is causing us no less suffering! Well, man is mortal, and he is already old. He should do well to depart to the other world rather than suffer here!"

Indradas was shocked, not so much for what the young lady said, but for his son's silence. He had accumulated all his wealth for them; but they had grown impatient with him in a month and wished for his death!



Next day Somnath came to see the ailing Indradas. Suddenly Indradas broke down and said, "My brother, I have caused anguish and suffering to many. How can I escape the consequence? I wish to die soon!"

"My friend, we all do mistakes. If you repent, God will be kind to you. Don't give up hope. Let's go to the town and seek the advice of some good physician," said Somnath.

Indradas agreed to the proposal. Somnath arranged for a cart and a village boy to accompany them. They were in the town the next day. Indradas was entrusted to a good physician.

In three months Indradas was completely cured.

"God heard our prayers!" exclaimed his daughter-in-law when Indradas returned home.

Indradas smiled sadly. "Thank God, He did not hear your prayer. Had He heard it, I would not have returned home," he said, but to himself!

In the evening Indradas was out for a stroll with Somnath. He sat down near the plot of land Somnath had pledged to him and said, "My brother, pardon this sinner. Your land remains yours. Please forget of that loan. I had the accident on an auspicious day. For many days I wondered why a curse should befall me on a day that was supposed to do good! Now I realise that it was no curse at all. It is true that I suffered. But the suffering gave me much light!"

Somnath smiled. "Yes, my brother, you have changed so much—so much for the better!" he said softly.





GLIMPSES OF THE DEVI BHAGAVATAM

The demon brothers, Rambho and Karambho, were quite ambitious. In order to gain some boons from the great Gods, they decided to devote themselves to deep meditation.

Karambho sat in a river and meditated; Rambho did the same perching himself in a tree.

Indra used to grow scared of anybody who meditated on the great Gods. Under his influence, a crocodile killed Karambho in the river.

When Rambho learnt of his brother's death, he lighted a flame before him and decided to sacrifice himself to the God of Fire. He unsheathed his sword

for the purpose.

At once the God of Fire appeared before him and said, "To take one's own life is a grievous sin. Don't do it. Ask me for a boon."

"Very well. Let me have a son who cannot be killed by gods, men or demons," said Rambho. He wanted to wreak vengeance on the gods through such a powerful son, in case he too got killed like his brother.

"It is granted," said the God of Fire and he vanished.

Rambho wandered from place to place. One day he met a young demoness. Fascinated by her, he married her. The de-



moness was in the habit of assuming the form of a she-buffalo when travelling.

One day when Rambho and his wife were crossing a forest — Rambho's wife in the form of a buffalo—a wild buffalo saw her and attacked her. Rambho went to her rescue, but got killed. His wife sacrificed herself in his funeral pyre.

She was then pregnant. Out of the fire emerged her two sons, Mahishasur and Raktabeej.

Mahishasur soon distinguished himself as an uncompromising foe of the gods. The demons, pleased with him, made him their king. Renowned de-

mon-heroes like Tikshur, Tamra, Asiloma, Sudarka, Vidal, Trinetra, and Kalavandhaka became his ministers and generals.

The war between the gods and the demons was continuing for a long time. Mahishasur climbed the Kanchan mountain and sat for years concentrating on Brahma. When Brahma at last appeared before him the demon asked him for the boon of immortality.

"Whoever is born must die. I cannot make you immortal. Ask me for some other boon," said Brahma.

"Grant me then, O God, that no hero among the gods or men or demons can ever vanquish me," prayed Mahishasur.

"Let it be so," said Brahma.

When Mahishasur asked for this boon, he had in his mind the male heroes. He never imagined that there was any possibility of a goddess or a woman or a demoness turning his enemy.

Mahishasur, now protected by Brahma's boon, grew extremely proud. He sent an emissary to heaven.

The demon-emissary met Indra, the king of gods, and said, "I come from the mighty demon-king, Mahishasur. He proposes that you surrender

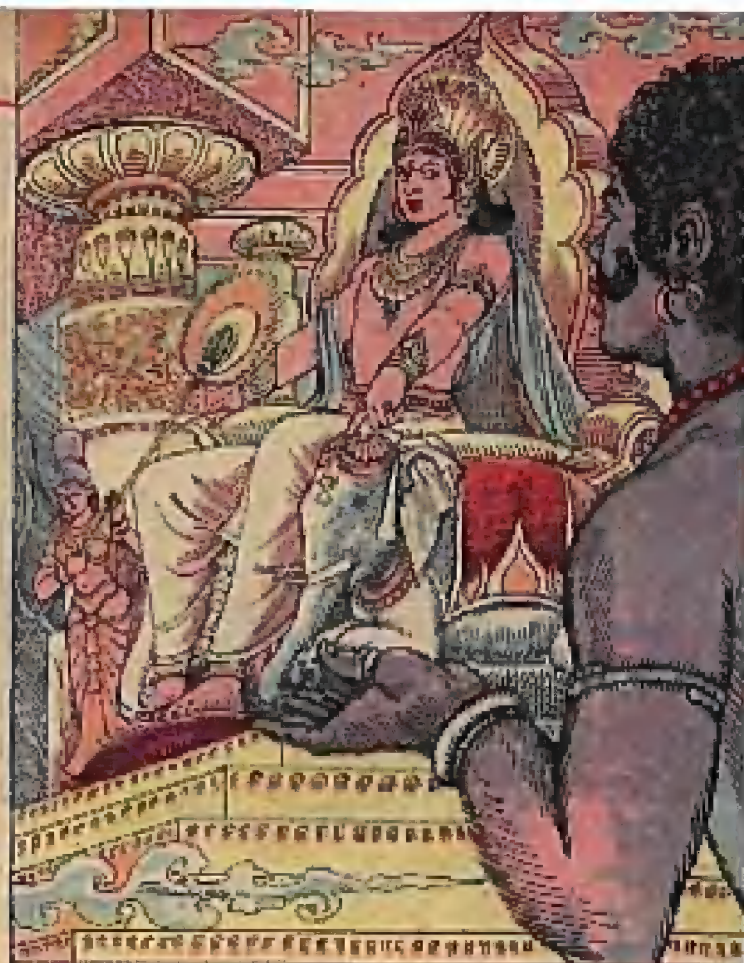
your abode to him. Let all the gods live peacefully as his subjects. You can turn down the proposal only to your own peril. You ought to know that there is nobody equal to my king in strength or valour. To go to fight him would mean only one thing for you—to meet your doom."

Indra burst out, "Listen, you impudent emissary of an impudent demon! You deserve to die; but I spare you to uphold the dignity of your office. Go and tell your master that he is welcome to fight me. I have heard that he sports a pair of horns. I shall pluck them and use them in my thunder."

The emissary went away.

"My lord, the words that Indra used were too derogatory of you to be repeated by me. In brief, he is ready to meet your challenge."

"Audacity!" cried out Mahishasur. "Who does not know that it is more through tricks than through valour that Indra has retained his position? Does he not employ the nymphs to distract the hermits from their spiritual goal? What does he know of fighting? I shall finish him in no time. In fact, I intend to put an end to the



whole race of the gods. Vishnu who always helps them should be punished too."

He summoned the leading demons and told them, "Heaven is a luxurious place. Gods have enjoyed the place for too long. It is time you drive them out of heaven and occupy it."

The demons were quite happy at the prospect of conquering heaven for themselves.

In heaven, Indra called the leading gods and said, "Mahishasur who has grown audacious on account of a boon from Brahma sent an emissary with an offending proposal. I had to reject it. He has threatened



duty to try to protect this domain of the gods to the best of your capacity. I can be of no help to you except wishing you victory," said Brihaspati.

"I will of course do my best. But the foe we are facing is terrible. He believes that the boon of Brahma has made him invincible. He thinks that the conflict between the gods and the demons has gone on for a very long time. It should be brought to an end. According to his idea, to subdue or to vanquish the gods once for all should be the best solution to the problem. What should be the best course of action for us?"

"O king, no demon can be more powerful than Providence. The question is whether Providential support will be available to us or not. For the rest, my advice is not likely to be of any worth to you, because in a war it is the king's mind and not a priest's that works past."

Indra went to Brahma, "O Lord," he said, "the proud Mahishasur is about to attack heaven. We are feeling quite uneasy about it. We seek your advice as to how to face the challenge."

"The issue should not be tackled without the advice of

war. No doubt, he is very powerful. But there is no way out for us. We must fight. It is important for us to know the strength of the demon-king's army."

The gods agreed with him. A capable spy was despatched to survey the army of Mahishasur. The spy's report astounded Indra. He met Brihaspati, the priest and guide of the gods, and said, "I had no idea that Mahishasur had mobilised such a huge army. What is your advice to us?"

"This is a critical situation. What you must muster now are patience and courage. It is your

Shiva and Vishnu. Let us go to them," said Brahma.

At first they reached Mount Kailash, the dwelling of Shiva. Thereafter the three met Vishnu.

The three Gods assured Indra that their help will be available to him. In the meanwhile the demons came rushing upon heaven. Indra met them with the army of gods. A fierce battle was fought. But the gods had no luck. The demons soon conquered heaven. Mahishasur sat on Indra's throne.

The leading demons took charge of the various important areas of heaven. They became the masters of all the treasures and splendours of heaven. The gods fled and took shelter in the sea, in the hills and the forests.

Indra and some other gods met Brahma again. "Is our defeat in the hands of the demons final? Is there anything we can do to recover our lost position?"

"The demon-king cannot be killed by any male member of the races of gods, men or demons. Who then can kill him? Let's consult Vishnu and Shiva once again," said Brahma. He led them to Shiva.

"Are you not the source of the demon-king's strength? Is it not because of your boon that



he has grown so audacious? But where is the woman who would go forward to confront him? Will Shachi, the wife of Indra, dare to meet the demon in a battle? I don't think so. Let's seek Vishnu's counsel," said Shiva.

They hurried to Vishnu. He heard about Brahma's boon and said, "If Mahishasur cannot be killed by any god, he can be killed by a goddess. Let us contribute our powers to the creation of a deity."

The gods lost no time in throwing their powers with the combination of which emerged a luminous goddess. To her

eighteen hands the gods offered their various weapons.

"Fear not. The demon shall be vanquished by me!" said the goddess.

She went forward and gave out a sharp war-cry. That startled the demon-king. "Who made such a noise? Surely not the defeated gods. Who then?" wondered Mahishasur and he directed his lieutenants to capture whoever had made that sound.

Some of the demons at once went out to capture the goddess. But they returned to their king as fast as they had gone out and said, "A lady seated on a

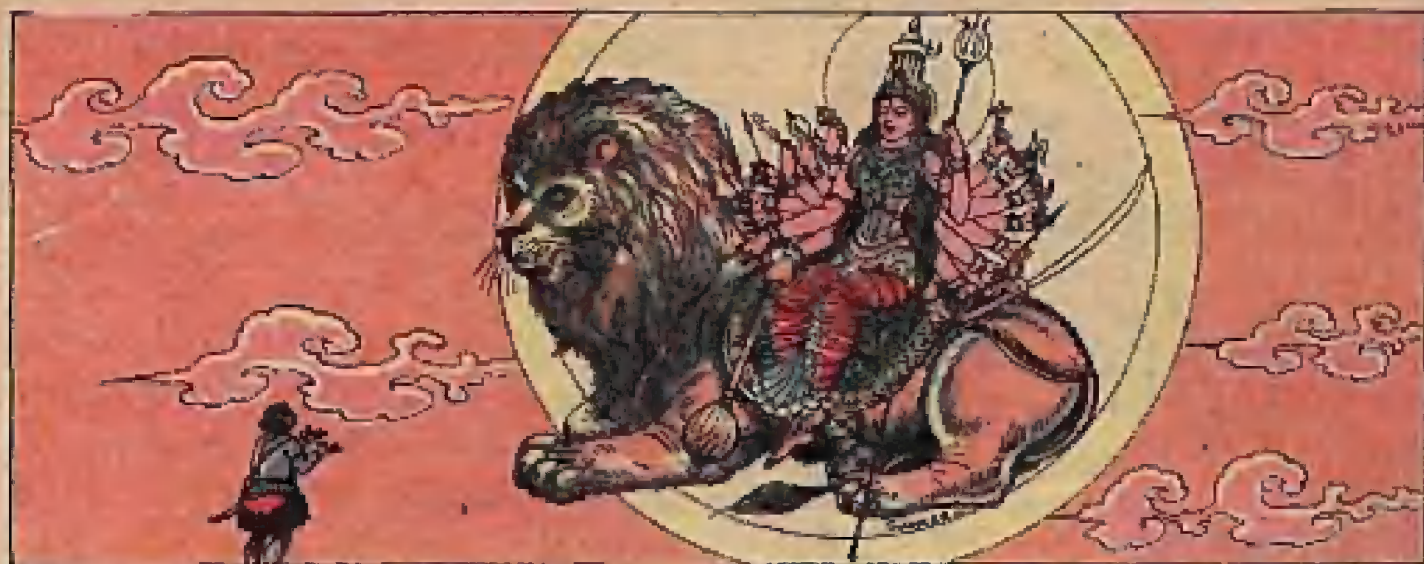
lion, her eighteen hands equipped with weapons, is coming in this direction. She inspires panic in all!"

"Panic! Only such a lady deserved to be my queen. Go, my friends, offer her the position and bring her to me," said Mahishasur, looking at his ministers.

The ministers approached the goddess and said, "We do not know who you are and how you ought to be addressed. But the king of the three domains is willing to make you his queen."

"Well, I'm out to destroy the menace that is your king. You fellows are innocent. Keep





away," said the goddess with a smile of compassion for the old demons.

The ministers returned to Mahishasur and reported to him what they saw and heard. The demon-king felt quite amazed. He asked his general, Tamra, to bring the goddess as his prisoner,

Tamra spoke to the goddess in an arrogant tone and met his death. On receiving this unexpected report, Mahishasur sent some of his ablest lieutenants to capture the goddess. None of them returned.

Mahishasur could not believe his own ears. He gave out a

loud roar. Even his courtiers were terrified. He then picked up his arms and went out to meet the goddess.

He was wonderstruck at what he saw. The divinely charming figure that sat on the lion challenged him to a fight. He tried his best to scare her, but failed miserably.

The fight began. In no time the demon-king who had taken hold of the three regions by storm fell lifeless under the trident of the goddess.

The gods in heaven offered their hymns of gratitude to the great goddess—the incarnation of the Divine Mother.

(To Continue)

Most of those who insist that their arguments are absolutely sound, are right. Their arguments are nothing but sound, just sound.

FESTIVALS OF INDIA

CHRISTMAS

the calendar that prevailed in olden days in the West. On that day the people lighted fires, partly to make merry (remember how cold it is then!) and partly to encourage the sun! They thought that the sun who had grown weak deserved some warmth to be sent up to him!

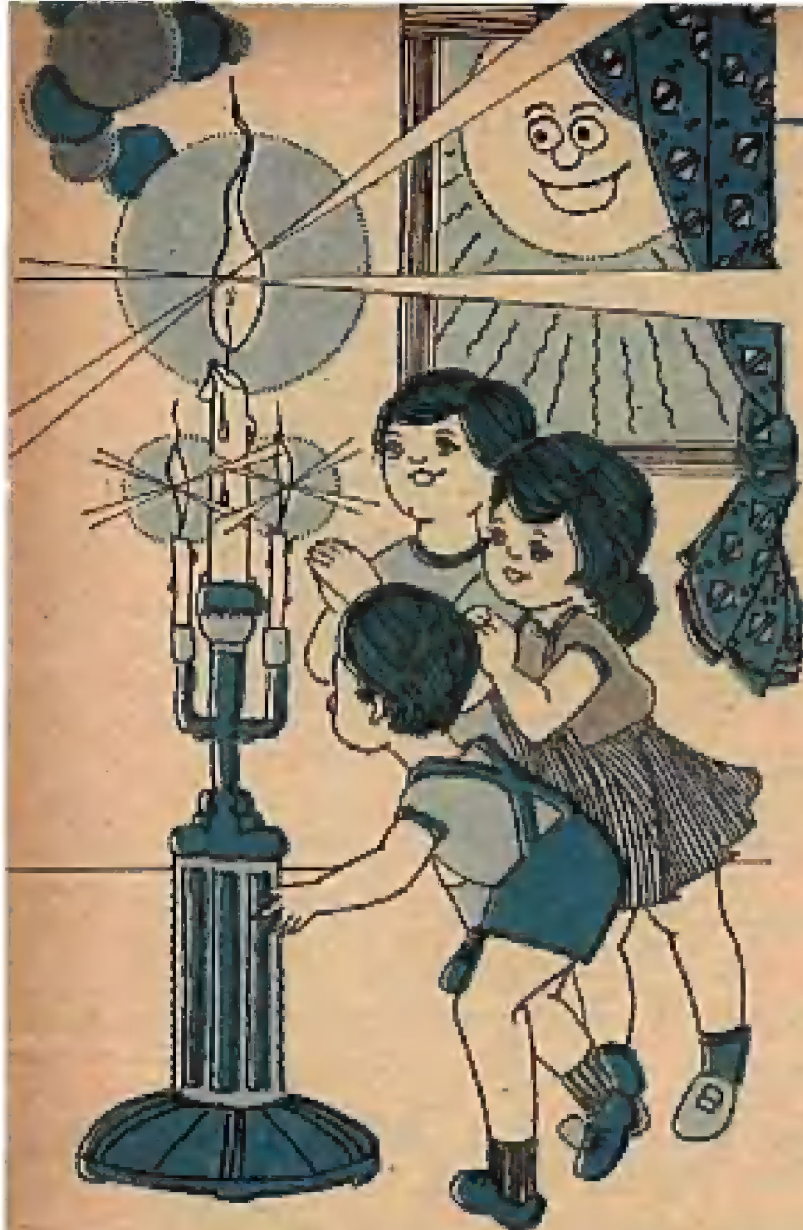


Nineteen hundred and eightyone years ago it was not the custom to put down the date of birth of a child either in any office or in any temple. That is why nobody can say on which day Jesus Christ was born.

The early Christians decided to celebrate the 25th of December as his birthday. That was because the day was already a festive day according to tradition.

The 25th of December was the shortest day according to





Perhaps a memory of that practice remains in the candles we light today. But there is another explanation for the candles. They are meant to remind us of the stars that shone above Bethlehem on the night Jesus was born.

Christmas came to India long after Christianity came—for Christianity was brought to India in the 1st century itself (as you have been informed earlier in *The Story of India*) by St. Thomas.

While Christmas is observed all over India—with Christmas trees, decorations, Mass, exchange of greetings, feasts and good resolutions—in Goa it is marked by special gusto. The atmosphere grows vibrant with carol-singing, dances and balls.

In Bombay, Mid-night Mass is held in the open air at the Cooperage Grounds. In Delhi, apart from Mid-night Mass, services are held at the Sacred Heart Cathedral.





Not Capacity Alone

Gopalji was a wealthy money-lender and a good man. He liked to help others.

One day he called his son Vimal into his room. "I am going out on a pilgrimage. You look after the business."

"But, father, I don't understand much of the business!" murmured Vimal.

"I'm growing old. Tomorrow or the day after you have to take charge of my whole business. Why not begin today? Be guided by your own intelligence. When you have a doubt about something, you may consult my old account books," said Gopalji. Next day he was out.

Two or three days later a fruit-seller met Vimal and asked him for a loan of four thousand rupees. Vimal, while talking to him, found out that the man made a profit of fifty rupees per day. "How can this man pay back my four thousand?" he wondered, and said that he was willing to give him only a thousand.

"But, young man, I have borrowed even larger amounts from your father!" protested the fruit-seller.

"No, my friend, I cannot give you more than a thousand rupees," said Vimal.

Just then a famous jeweller of the town arrived there. He led

Vimal to a corner of the house and confided to him of his need. "I need ten thousand rupees immediately. I shall pay back very soon."

Vimal had no hesitation in giving him the amount. But he did not pay more than a thousand rupees to the fruit-seller.

The next month the fruit-seller paid two hundred rupees back to Vimal. The month after that he paid three hundred more. In another two months he repaid the entire loan.

But there was no sign of the jeweller paying back the loan.

Gopalji returned after six months. He looked into the account books and asked Vimal, "So, you paid ten thousand rupees to the jeweller, did you?"

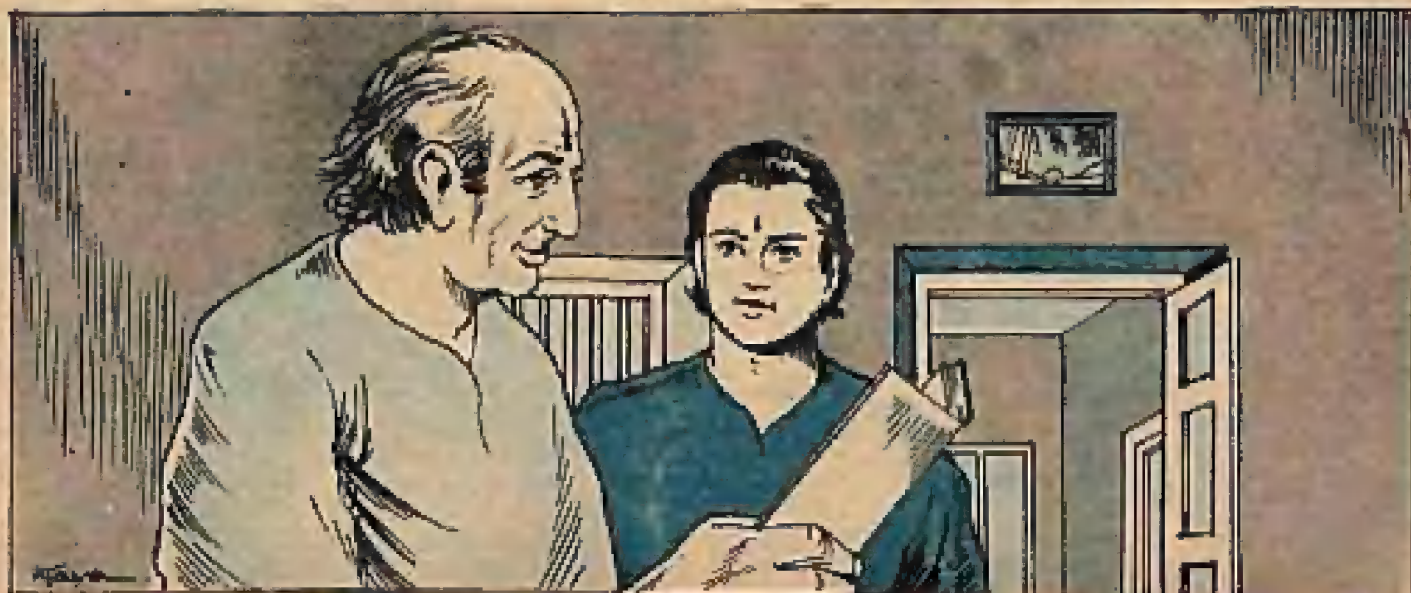
"Yes. I thought he would repay the amount soon. I don't understand why he did not! I'm

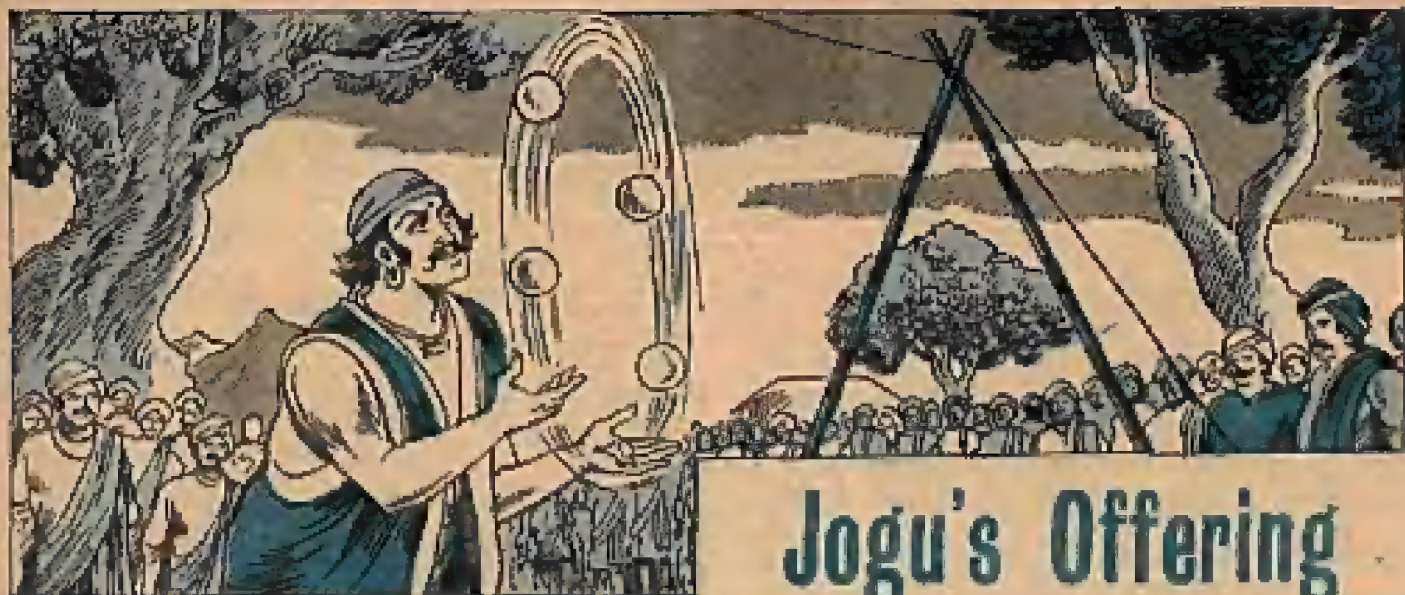
sure he has the capacity to pay back!" observed Vimal.

"It is not capacity alone that makes one repay a loan, my boy! One must have the eagerness to repay! You applied your intelligence all right, but forgot to heed my second advice. Had I not asked you to consult my books? Had you done so, you would have found that I had never lent any money to the jeweller, whereas the fruit-seller had received loans several times," explained Gopalji.

"Are we going to lose the ten thousand rupees?" asked Vimal with some anxiety.

"Oh no," said Gopalji with a smile. Vimal's marriage was in the offing. Gopalji visited the jeweller's shop and brought home a costly necklace for the bride. That made up for the loan, including the interest.





Jogu's Offering

Jogu was a magician and a good one at that. Naturally he was quite popular.

From time to time he would appear in the village squares and speak loudly about his own wonderful feats. Crowds would gather around him. He would play with circling balls, with fire and with sticks. His audience would applaud him. Then they would disperse; only some would care to throw coins at him.

People appreciated him all right, but the amount of money he earned from his feats was hardly enough to enable him to feed his small family.

"Let us go over to the town," he once told his family. "Rich people live there. They would not only appreciate my feats better, but also would pay me more."

He moved to the town. He rented a hut in a slum and began showing his tricks here and there. The money he earned was slightly more than what he earned in his village, but he had to spend more for their food in the town. Soon he found out that he had not done anything wise by coming over to the town. However, he continued to live there.

Then came the time of the annual festival in his village. It was a holy festival when special offerings were made to the deity in the village shrine. Year after year he showed his tricks to the crowd that gathered before the temple during the festival. He yearned to be in his village.

"I must visit my village," Jogu told his wife.

"That would mean further

misery. You can earn neither here nor there," said his wife.

Even then Jogu left for the village. He was surprised to see that much had changed in the village. The villagers had grown well-to-do because of good harvest and commerce.

All were happy to see Jogu back. But nobody asked him to perform his trick. They had greater attractions. They had commissioned a drama troupe to perform before them.

Jogu saw that all were doing their best to make the festival a success. Some were busy cleaning the temple courtyard. Some were decorating the surround-

ing. Many were engaged in making preparations for the feast.

"Everybody is serving the goddess. How unlucky I am that I have nothing to do for the deity!" Jogu thought as he sighed. He lost the peace of his mind and sat gloomy.

It was night. The troupe was performing the drama. All the villagers were outside the temple witnessing the play.

The priest of the deity entered the temple to see if the lamp had enough oil in it. To his surprise he saw Jogu standing before the deity and performing his magic. After a while Jogu





stopped and told the deity in a low voice, "Mother, this is one of my best tricks. Here is another. I have nothing to offer to you except these feats."

Jogu then went on performing the other trick.

Suddenly it appeared to the priest that as though the deity was looking at Jogu with great interest. Jogu finished his trick and prostrated himself to the

deity. At once the priest saw, in the twinkle on an eye, the hand of the deity touching Jogu's head.

"Jogu, my dear friend, you are the luckiest of devotees!" the priest told Jogu in the morning. Jogu did not understand why the priest gave him the compliment, but he looked contented, for he had offered to the deity the best he could!

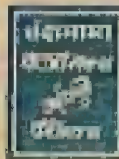
(Adapted)

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The Prize for October '81 goes to:

Mrs. T. S. Prabhavati Devi, Ramakrishnapuram,
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The Winning Entry: 'A Touching Finish' - 'A Finishing Touch'

PICKS FROM
THE WISE

There is no cure for birth or death save to enjoy the interval.

—George Santayana.

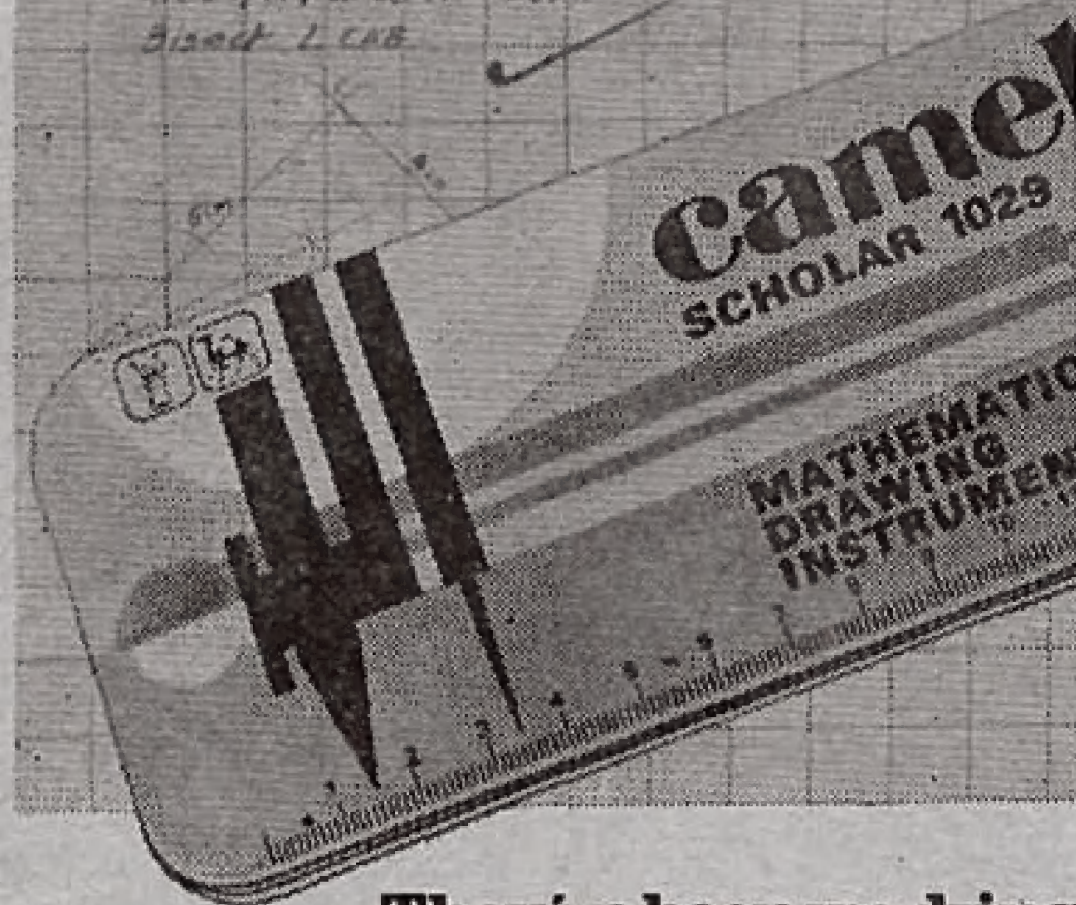
The end of the human race will be that it will eventually die of civilization.

Every man is wanted, and no man is wanted much.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson.

**Amit is pretty good at maths.
So is his camel geometry box.**

*AC = 4 cm and CA = 5 cm
Bisect L CAB*



**They've been working
together for the last two years.**

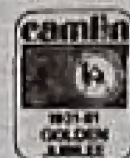
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Results of Chandamama—Camlin Colouring Contest No. 21 (English)

1st Prize: Gajendra Ku. Patnaik, Balasore. **2nd Prize:** Arpita Dheer, Lakhimpur. **3rd Prize:** Roshani A. Umrigar, Bombay-80. **Consolation Prizes:** Aradhana Saini, New Delhi-23; Miss. Sameta Arun Vartak, Thana-401 201; Ashok Patel, Thana-400 601; K. Ashavarghese, Trimulghery; Miss Sangita Das, Cuttack-2.

Jeevan and Hanu conclude that Health is Wealth



Whew! Isn't life strange, Jeevan?

Why do you say that?

Look, so far we have learned about great mental achievements and physical feats. I am wondering whether I will ever attain such glory.

Cheer up, Hanu! It's not necessary for you to make the pages of the World Records book right away. Why not just aim to have a sound mind and body to begin with?

If I do, will I get a medal, or a bunch of bananas at least?

Why, you might get something better than that!
For a start you'll have a longer life. . . .

Hey wait a minute! Hasn't longevity something to do with life insurance?

It certainly does, Hanu. As a matter of fact the science of life insurance is based on the study of the life expectancy of a large group of people.

Well, anyway I'm only a kid. I shouldn't have to bother about life insurance, I suppose.

No, you should. Or I should, as your guardian.

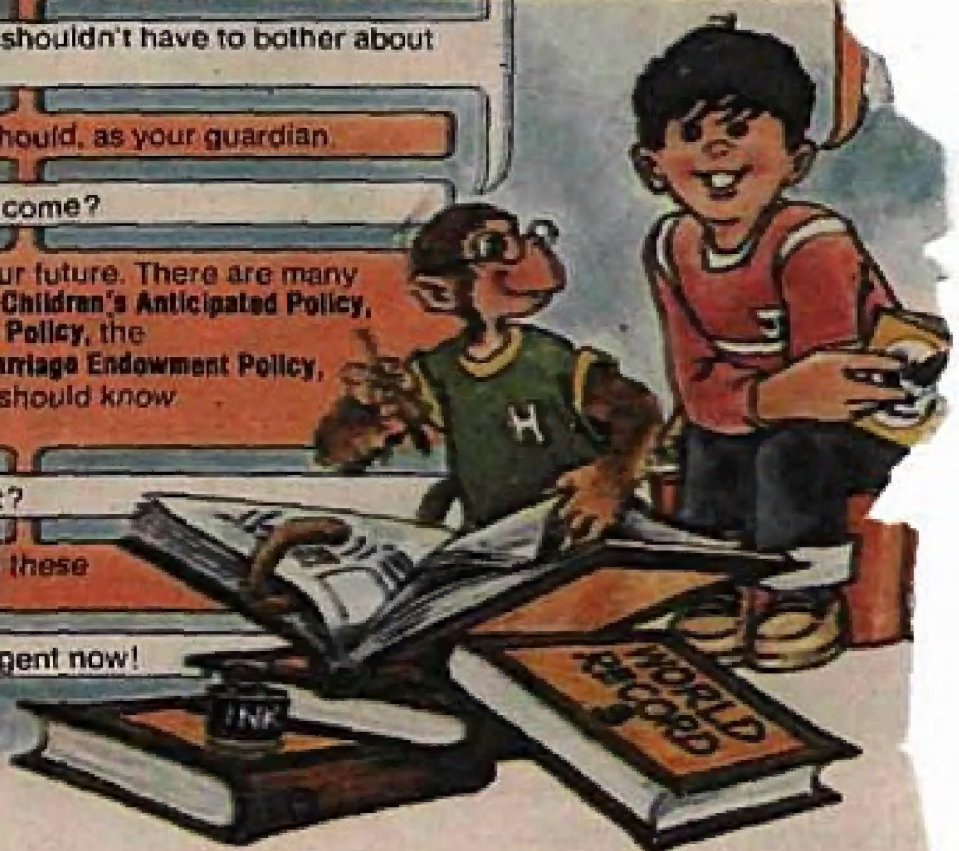
How come?

I have a duty . . . protecting your future. There are many kinds of life insurance like the Children's Anticipated Policy, the Children's Deferred Assurance Policy, the Educational Annuity Policy, the Marriage Endowment Policy, etc. All parents and guardians should know about these policies.

How can they do that?

By asking the L.I.C. agent about these plans and how they work.

Then take me to see an L.I.C. agent now!



Life Insurance Corporation of India



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